1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda
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CHAPTER XVIII

SACRED PLACES AND OBJECTS

THE Todas show undoubted signs of reverence to various material objects. Many of the objects so revereneed have been mentioned incidentally in the account of the dairy ritual and in other places, and in this chapter I propose to consider how far these objects are regarded as sacred, and to give an account of some sacred objects not hitherto noticed. 778

Of the various objects of reverence the following are the most important: hills and rivers; villages, dairies, their thresholds and contents; bells; the buffalo and its milk; trees and plants; the sun, fire and light; and stones.

HILLS AND OTHER PLACES.

Any place connected with the gods is reverenced by the the Todas, and this is especially the case with the hills where they dwell. Only some hills, however, are shown reverence by means of the *kaimukkiti* salutation. One of these is the hill of Nōtirzi (Snowdon), and every Toda visiting this hill salutes with hand to forehead in all directions. Another place where a similar salutation is performed is a spot at Avalanche Top. When I visited this place with Kutadri he saluted in all directions with both hands to his face, and told me that a man who once omitted to do this was killed soon after by a tiger. In this case I could not learn that Kutadri was saluting any particular hill or other spot. He seemed to be saluting the region of the Kundahs on which he was about to enter. 778 823 788

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

778 788 There are doubtless other places where the same sign of reverence is used.

The sanctity of the hills will be further considered in the next chapter, when discussing in what sense at the present time the gods are believed to dwell on their summits.

RIVERS

778 788 823 784 There are two sacred rivers, the Teipakh (Paikara) and the Pakhwar (Avalanche), both identified with or inhabited by gods. They are the two largest streams on the Nilgiris, and there are numerous indications of their sanctity. Every Toda crossing either of these streams must put his right arm outside his cloak (*kevenarut*) while he is doing so. The only exception to this rule is in the case of a widower who is wearing his cloak over his head, and he shows his respect by putting out his right hand below the cloak. On cold days the Todas wrap their cloaks closely around them, and I have often seen them put out their right arms just before they stepped on the bridge near the Paikara bungalow, and put them in again with obvious relief the moment they had reached the other side.

At one time these rivers might only be crossed on certain days of the week. The Toda believed that if they crossed on a Tuesday, Friday, or Saturday, consequences might ensue which could only be set right by the *irnörtiti* ceremony. This prohibition is no longer in force, but its influence is still shown in another way.

When two *matchuni* cross either of these rivers in company they usually perform a ceremony to be described on p. 501, but this ceremony is omitted on the three days above mentioned, probably because the people should not properly be there at all.

778 784 788 823 793 The *palol* may not cross either of the rivers except at certain spots which are not the places used by ordinary people. In the old days there were certain fords, and the *palol* had his own ford. At the present time, when the Todas habitually cross the Paikara by means of a bridge, the restriction is put in the form that "the *palol* may not cross

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

the river by the bridge." The *kaltmokh* also may not cross the river by the bridge except when he is degraded to the rank of *perkursol*. 778 784

There is a small stream near Nòdrs which may not be crossed at a given spot, this being the place where Teikirzi is reputed to have shared out the buffaloes among the Todas. 788 823 793

The only other restriction on crossing water was of a different kind. One who had been bitten by a snake might not cross a stream, and this applied to any stream and not only to the two sacred rivers of Teipakh and Pakhwar.

VILLAGES

It is difficult to distinguish how far the sanctity of a village is due to its dairy. No village without a dairy is regarded as sacred, but there is no doubt that the village itself may have some sanctity, and it is probable that the chief village of a clan which no longer had a dairy might nevertheless continue to be treated with some degree of reverence. 778 621 788

Reverence is shown to every village which is called an *etudmad*, but this word is used in two senses. The chief village of the clan from which the people of the clan take their name is the *etudmad* of the clan or *madol*, but the same name is also given to any village to which any special idea of sanctity attaches, and this is especially marked if its dairy should possess a *mani*. The sign of reverence paid to an *etudmad* is the salutation called *kaimukhti* or *kaburlti*. Whenever a man comes within sight of one of these villages he purifies his mouth by chewing some grass, and then salutes the village by placing his hand in front of his face in the way shown in Fig. 10. The salutation is performed with the right hand outside the cloak (*kevesavut*), and if a man is wearing a turban he will take it off, as is shown in the figure.

When a man salutes in this way he may be two or three miles from the village, the salutation being made, according to some accounts, directly the man sees the village, and according to others, not until he sees the dairy. When my guide Kòdrner was saluting the sacred village of Kiudr, I could see neither the hut nor the dairy of this village,

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

773 number." The gods are believed to have held their councils,
776 meeting on some special hill, to which each god came from
823 his own hill-top. The hill of Pòlkab, near Kanòdrs, and the village of Miuni are both renowned as meeting places of the gods.

There is a very definite association between the Toda gods and the hills of the Nilgiri plateau. Nearly every one of the gods has his hill where he dwells, and often when speaking of the gods the Todas seem to identify the god with the hill. There are two river gods, Teipakh and Pakhwar, associated with the two chief streams of the district, but there is some reason to believe that even these gods have their hills where they sometimes live, while at other times they inhabit or are identified with their streams. In the case of Teipakh, the god and the natural object seem to be very closely identified, and Kuzkarv, growing up in the river Teipakh, is said to be sitting in the lap of his maternal uncle. Again, one god is associated with a bubbling pool, but he also has his hill-top and is believed only to visit the pool on certain occasions. There can be little doubt that most of the Toda gods are hill-deities and that the association of the gods with hills is so strong that even the gods of streams and pools may be assigned their hills in general belief.

172 There is one important feature which is said to be common to all the hills inhabited by deities. They all have on their summits the stone circles which the Todas call *pun*. My informants were very definite about this and fully understood that these stone circles corresponded to the cairns and barrows opened by Breeks and others.

I was not able to examine into the question for myself and ascertain whether the circles called *pun* were actually present on the god-inhabited hills, but I have no reason to doubt that this was usually the case. Most writers on the Todas have been inclined to suppose that the cairns and barrows, with their contents, were in no way connected with the Todas, and they have based this opinion largely on the indifference of the Todas to these monuments. The people who are so jealous of their dairies that they will not allow anyone to enter or even view their contents, will allow any stranger to open the

1: Rivers E-5 (ca. 1901-02) 1906 Toda

In the process of divination men are possessed by gods; and another example of possession by the gods may be mentioned here, as I have not found a suitable place for it elsewhere. If any of the gods should sit on the back of a buffalo, the animal will go to the hill called Kûrâtvan, near Neduvattam, and this is said to have happened to two buffaloes in recent times. A buffalo which goes to this hill is allowed to find its own way back, and, provided the buffalo goes only to *etudmad*, its course will not be interfered with. One of the two buffaloes above-mentioned travelled back by way of Taradr, a place called Panmtu, Nòdrs, Miuni, and then went to its own village.

In the chapter on divination I have pointed out that many of the deities who inspire the diviners are not true Toda gods, and this suggests that the practice of divination may have been borrowed from surrounding peoples, in which case caution would be needed in drawing conclusions from the beliefs associated with the practice. I believe, however, that the information given to me on this point is based on recent utterances of the *teuol* themselves when in a state of frenzy. Each *teuol* was asked by whom he was inspired, and I think it not unlikely that the answers were influenced by the recent associations of the Todas.

At the present time none of the gods are ever seen by mortals. As we have already found, the hills where they are supposed to dwell are, in some cases, regarded with reverence; but I obtained no evidence that the Todas avoid the summits even of those hills where the most important deities are supposed to be, though unfortunately I omitted to put this to the test by asking any of the more scrupulous Todas to accompany me to these places. The god-inhabited hills, however, are, in most cases, the sites of cairns and barrows, and the whole experience of those who have excavatel these sites seems to show that the Todas exhibit no special reluctance to visit these dwelling-places of the gods.

I think that there can be little doubt that most of the individual gods of the Todas are becoming very unreal beings to those who talk of them. The stories of the easlier gods are now being forgotten, and the ideas of the Todas about them are

2: Marshall G-5 (1870) 1873 Toda

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unbroken sweep of low flat country, dotted with hills. Picture it an island in a tropical archipelago; storm, cloud, and driving mist intervening between periods of brilliant sunshine. Try to realise the equatorial sun acting through this ever-changing sky and rarified atmosphere, both on the sweet inland prospect, and as you turn to take an eagle's view outwards, over the grand panorama of the long horizon. Both are unique and lovely.

There is one view, on the precipitous western ridge of the plateau, below Makurti Peak—

'The last hill that parleys with the setting sun,'

which seems to unite all the *possible* beauties of such a land. Such a mixture of the lovely properties which a landscape may derive from the presence of stupendous depths, brilliantly transparent and buoyant atmosphere, delicate distances, changing tints, and wonderful shadows, I have not seen combined, even in the Himalayas; and, I believe, few spots in the world can exhibit.[1]

Had the Toda made this spot the entrance to his heaven—Amnôr (of which, more in its proper place), he would at one step have placed himself on a pinnacle of good taste, from which it would not have been easy to dislodge him. But to have omitted all notice of these extraordinary beauties, marks him as the tasteless man he is.[2]

Let me here describe an *inland* scene; which, though casually witnessed by myself, must often be surveyed by the

[1] The artist in search of a study of aërial effects, could nowhere find them so complete and satisfying as in this view. Owing to monsoon rains, clear days in which to watch it cannot often be got before the month of October. To be seen to perfection, both sunrise and sunset should be witnessed.

[2] In Chapter I. I have quoted a Toda legend, that the souls of men and cattle leap from Makurti on their journey to Amnôr; but in the expression of this belief there appears to be no appreciation of the beauty in the scene;—merely that Makurti is the highest and westernmost hill, nearest the setting sun (See Chapter XII.), and therefore the *most suitable locality* for the purpose.

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
AW60 Toda AW60

about eight and ten, naked save for a loin-cloth, seated on the ground, awaiting our arrival. As a mark of respect to the palols, the three Todas who accompanied me arranged their putkûlis so that the right arm was laid bare, and one of them, who was wearing a turban, removed it. A long palaver ensued in consequence of the palols demanding ten rupees to cover the expenses of the purificatory ceremonies, which, they maintained, would be necessary if I desecrated the mand by photographing it. Eventually, however, under promise of a far smaller sum, the dwelling-hut was photographed, with palols, kaltmokhs, and a domestic cat seated in front of it.

In connection with the palol being forbidden to cross a river by a bridge, it may be noted that the river which flows past the Paikâra bungalow is regarded as sacred by the Todas, and, for fear of mishap from arousing the wrath of the river god, a pregnant Toda woman will not venture to cross it. The Todas will not use the river water for any purpose, and they do not touch it unless they have to ford it. They then walk through it, and, on reaching the opposite bank, bow their heads. Even when they walk over the Paikâra bridge, they take their hand out of the putkûli as a mark of respect. Concerning the origin of the Paikâra river, a grotesque legend was narrated to us. Many years ago, the story goes, two Todas, uncle and nephew, went out to gather honey. After walking for a few miles they separated, and proceeded in different directions. The uncle was unsuccessful in the search, but the more fortunate nephew secured two kandis (bamboo measures) of honey. This, with a view to keeping it all for himself, he secreted in a crevice among the rocks, with the exception of a very small quantity, which he made his uncle believe was the entire product of his search. On the

7:Thurston E-5 (no date)1909
AW60 Toda AW60

778 823 539 following day, the nephew went alone to the spot where the honey was hidden, and found, to his disappointment, that the honey was leaking through the bottom of the bamboo measures, which were transformed into two snakes. Terrified at the sight thereof, he ran away, but [825] the snakes pursued him (may be they were hamadryads, which have the reputation of pursuing human beings). After running a few minutes, he espied a hare (*Lepus nigricollis*) running across his course, and, by a skilful manœuvre, threw his body-cloth over it. Mistaking it for a man, the snakes followed in pursuit of the hare, which, being very fleet of foot, managed to reach the sun, which became obscured by the hoods of the reptiles. [821] This fully accounts for the solar eclipse. The honey, which leaked out of the vessels, became converted into the Paikāra river.

733 166 In connection with the migrations of the herds of buffaloes, Dr. Rivers writes as follows. "At certain seasons of the year, it is customary that the buffaloes both of the village and the ti should migrate from one place to another. Sometimes the village buffaloes are accompanied by all the inhabitants of the village; sometimes the buffaloes are only accompanied by their dairyman and one or more male assistants. There are two chief reasons for these movements of the buffaloes, of which the most urgent is the necessity for new grazing-places . . . . The other chief reason for the migrations is that certain villages and dairies, formerly [796] important and still sacred, are visited for ceremonial purposes, or out of respect to ancient custom." For the following note on a buffalo migration which he came across, I am indebted to Mr. H. C. Wilson. "During the annual migration of buffaloes to the Kundahs, and when they were approaching the bridle-path leading from